Annual report for the North Berwick Gardening Club 2020/2021

With the start of the global pandemic, the Club’s AGM did not take place in April 2020, as an interim measure the Annual Report and Accounts were posted on the website until such a time as we could all meet in person. Here we are, one year on and that has not happened, however as a Club we have managed to be flexible, adaptable and rise to the challenges. The AGM will be held on Zoom for the first time and this report presented.

Margaret Ann Crawford handed over the role of Chair to Cathie Wright and Lyle Crawford handed over the role of Secretary to Jeanette Hamer. Both Betty McMorland and John Evans stood down from the committee after many years contributing to the Club, thank you to you both. Janie Riddle joined the committee. This year both Ann Jones and Janie are standing down, so a huge thank you to both for giving up their time and especially to Ann for the work she did with the Courier ensuring excellent coverage.

Because of Coronovirus restrictions, we were unable to hold the Autumn Show. Instead, Dr Stan da Prato kindly offered to run a guided tour of the Lodge Gardens in August for a small group of members. Such was the success of this, we ended up running 4 tours, each with a small group of socially distanced members. We visited the rockery, the herbaceous border, the stumpery, the carpet bed and rare trees with Stan sharing his gardening and wildlife knowledge, identifying butterflies and birds as we went.

Normally the Club holds a Plant Sale and Coffee Morning, but this year we came up with the idea of “Chose a Plant and Donate” where members of the gardening club brought along seedlings, perennials, herbs, shrubs, houseplants, alpines and some produce, all displayed in a socially distanced fashion along the path outside the Abbey Church and a one-way system was created.  This allowed visitors to choose a plant or two and then make a donation.  The event was held to raise funds to support North Berwick in Bloom's Tulip Bulb appeal, nearly £800 was raised, ensuring that the planters are currently overflowing with tulip blooms.

In September we ventured into the world of Zoom, with Stan bravely giving a presentation on bulbs. The Club bulbs were subsequently distributed from the boot of my car from the car park in town and delivered as necessary, in total 55 sets of bulbs were distributed.

In October, John "Tattie" Marshall delighted us all by giving a talk on Zoom about his Peruvian Adventure in 2018, "Planting Papas in Para Para, home of the potato". We were taken through the Peruvian Andes, to colourful modern markets, to Machu Piccu and finished up at 4.200m on the Potato Park, El Parque de la Papa, established to conserve the regions potato biodiversity.

Andrew Hogarth who has gardened with East Lothian Council for over 35 years and is a judge for Keep Scotland Beautiful, entertained and informed us with his presentation "Confessions of a Council Gardener 'in November. We learnt about the extensive work of East Lothian Council's Amenities department before hearing about the key work they do to encourage sustainability and biodiversity.

Still in lockdown in January we were transported to the National Trust for Scotland's Branklyn Gardens in Perth. Jim Jermyn, Head Gardener and Property Manager took us on a wonderful walk through the garden, starting with the snowdrops that are now in flower.  Jim continued highlighting some of the stunning specimens, national collections of Mecanopsis and Cassiope and telling a story or two as we travelled through the seasons.

In February from her home in the west of Scotland, near Glasgow, Nancy Stevens took us on a delightful tour through time, from first purchasing her home and garden on a 45-degree slope, to today, the delightful haven with many small "rooms" each with their own character and selection of plants.

The March meeting was Quiz night, and we were joined by members of Musselburgh, Gifford and Dalkeith horticultural clubs, for an evening of entertainment.  Thank you to our excellent quiz master, Stan da Prato, for the time, effort, and humour he gave to the evening. We were also joined by Paul Hamilton from Berwick, near Melbourne, Australia. He accidently made contact with us, wanting us to exhibit at their Annual Show, not realising we were halfway round the world. The contact has been made and we are currently looking at ways that we can work together.

Work with local schools continues at a distance and unfortunately because of COVID restrictions, no trips or outings were able to take place in 20/21.

Cathie Wright

29 April 2021